

McCutcheon Building (L. Litwin and Son)
637 Indiana Avenue, NW.
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. DC-413

HABS
DC
WASH,
308-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
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WASH,
308-

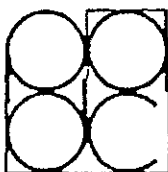
Addendum
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(L. Litwin & Son)
637 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-413

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127



PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

425 13TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON, NOTTER/MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
DEVROUX & PURNELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID McLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

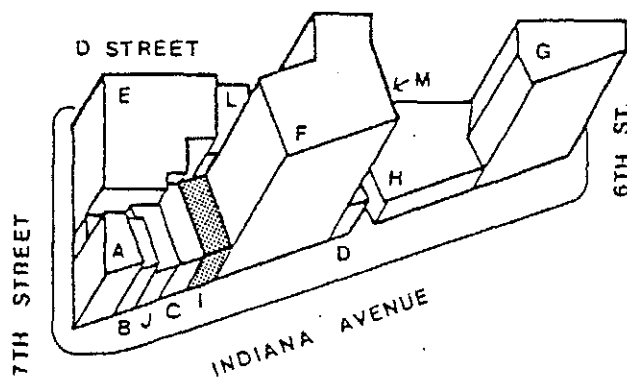
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

HABS No. DC 413

HABS
DC,
WASH.,
308-

McCutcheon Building
(Litwin Furniture)
637 Indiana Avenue, N.W.
Lot 1



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 458, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 458, see HABS No. DC-618.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Litwin's is situated on Sublot 1, part of original Lot 6 on 637 Indiana Avenue. This brick structure was constructed during the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century. It has three stories plus an attic and basement, and plan dimensions of 22' x 83'. On the north, or rear, there is a one-story addition, trapezoidal in plan, standing in what once was a service alley. To the west there are two similarly-sized buildings. On the east, Litwin's abutts a twelve-story modern office building.

On Indiana Avenue, the three-story facade presents a simple three-bay dimension that is established on the ground floor storefront by four simple granite piers. The piers have simple Greek Revival capitals with an echinus of elliptical section, and support an undecorated stone entablature. The entrance to the building occurs on the central bay. The lateral bays now feature modern plate glass windows on brick plinths. The upper facade is of brick laid in common bond and painted white. All window openings have wood lintels and sills, and Twentieth Century double-hung sash with one-over-one lites. The third floor windows are shorter than those on the level below. The facade is topped by a simple corbeled cornice from which hangs a metal gutter. The gabled roof is covered in metal with standing seams.

The rear elevation, once the alley facade, is interesting in that it has a ground level storefront similar to the one on the Indiana Avenue elevation. The three bay storefront is asymmetrically arranged possibly to have allowed for an independent door to the upper floors at the west end. The storefront is now encapsulated in the addition over the former alley. The elevation on the upper two floors again presents three jack-arched window-bays with six-over-six double-hung wooden sash. On the roof there are two closely spaced attic dormers that, from a stylistic appraisal, appear to be a later addition.

Inside, all levels are open in plan. The wood joists span the width of the building, bearing on the lateral brick walls. An old elevator is located along the west wall.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

637 Indiana Avenue is one of Washington's oldest extant commercial structures. Few buildings from this period remain in the city, thus this one has considerable historical value. The group of three buildings 637-641 Indiana Avenue is unique in the Pennsylv-

vania Avenue Development Corporation District. Litwin's has retained nearly all of its original features.

In 1809, original Lot 6 was subdivided into eight unequal lots. Josiah and Letitia King were bequeathed Lot 1. After changing hands several times, the lot was sold in 1824 to John McCutcheon for \$300.00. The low price suggests that there were no lot improvements at this time. The first City Directory, published in 1827, listed John McCutcheon, grocer, at this location on the northside of Indiana Avenue. Thus, the approximate date of construction may be placed between 1824 and 1827. City Directories henceforth confirm continued commercial use of this building to the present.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Interior: All floors present an open plan, with hardwood flooring extant throughout the building. On the first level, the floor boards are 3" wide; random width boards are used on the two upper levels and on the attic. Patchwork on the ceiling of the first level and on the second floor indicate the location of an earlier staircase. Ceilings on the first and second floor consist of random-width beaded boards. There is no ceiling on the third floor, thus exposing the 3" wide attic floor joists. The attic is also unfinished. The roof structure is framed with 3" x 8" rafters, supported at midspan between eave and ridge by a transverse truss.

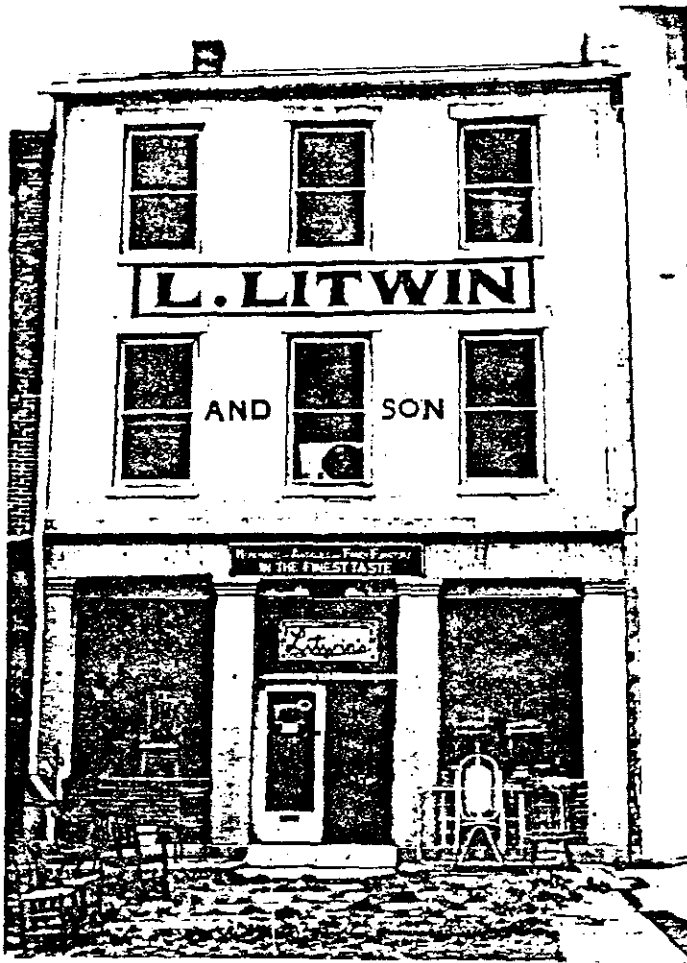
The lateral brick walls on the first floor have been furred and finished with gypsum board. On the second and third floors there is plaster directly applied to the masonry. On the east wall on both upper floors, cracking in the plaster indicates former arched openings in the party wall. In the attic, the brick gable walls are exposed and show 2 bricked-in windows on the east, and two open ones on the west. None of these windows appear to be original (derived from existing HABS documentation).

As in the attic, the basement has no finishes. The exposed foundation walls are brick and stone. The floor has oversized brick pavers pitched to a central gutter that slopes to the south. Earth-floored vaults occur both under the front sidewalk and the rear alley.

The one-story addition at the rear has a flat wooden roof structure with tar felt roofing. The floor contains an iron grate open to the basement vault underneath. There are also some granite-paved areas.

Elevator: An open cage elevator is located along the west party wall. It is a mid-Nineteenth Century model built by Otis, manually operated, with a hand brake. Mechanisms are hand-wrought and the elevator is still in use.

Note: HABS documentation and drawings were prepared for this building by Don Alexander Hawkins in 1976.



Indiana Avenue Facade (South)



Oblique View of Facade
Showing Gabled Roof

Lot 6 (Sublots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
637-643 Louisiana Avenue, 301-311 Seventh Street

Lot 6 is situated on the southwest corner of Square 458. As it was originally platted it measured 125 feet in its east-west dimension with frontage on Louisiana Avenue, and 120 feet in the north-south direction that fronted Seventh Street. Lot 6 was later subdivided into 8 lots designated 1, 2 (816), 3 (818), 4, 5 (823), 6, 7, and 8. Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 had frontage on Louisiana Avenue, Lot 5 had frontage on both Louisiana Avenue and Seventh Street, and Lots 6, 7 and 8 had frontage on Seventh Street.

1792.....Lot 6 was owned by David Burns (Record of Deeds, Liber A, Folio 1).

1799.....David Burns died.

1799.....William Whetcroft bought Lot 6.

Lot 6 (Sublot 1)
637 Louisiana Avenue

- 1809.....Letitia and Josias King were among the heirs of William Whetcroft. They inherited subdivision 1 of Lot 6. This title was transferred through a deed from Marcia B. Van Ness and John P. Van Ness to the heirs of William Whetcroft (Deed, Liber A, Folio 51).
- 1822.....William King, the son of Letitia and Josias King, signed a deed of trust for Lot 1 to Henry Mortiff on August 7 (Deed, Liber WB6, Folio 182).
- 1823.....John Stettinius bought Lot 1 for \$189.31 (Deed, Liber WB10, Folio 283).
- 1825.....John McCutcheon bought the property for \$300.00 (Deed WB13, Folio 183).
- 1827.....John McCutcheon, a grocer, is listed in the City Directory on the north side of Louisiana Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets.
- 1832.....Lot 1 was auctioned by John McCutcheon and sold to four parties. The proportions of the property to the owners were as follows:
- | | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Phillip Mauro | 20:60 |
| Sabnet Scott | 17:60 |
| Semmes & Co. | 12:60 |
| Albert C. Hicks | 11:60 |
- Mauro immediately after transferred his title to Samuel Bacon (Deed, his title to Samuel Bacon (Deed, Liber WB11, Folio 223).
- 1836.....William Kibbey bought the property at 637 Louisiana Avenue at a total of \$3,400.00 (Deeds, Liber WB71, Folio 213; Liber WB71, Folio 201; Liber WB71, Folio 205; Liber WB71, Folio 197).
- 1844.....Tax records show the lot assessed to William B. Kibbey at \$1,033.00.
- 1870.....The ground was assessed to William B. Kibbey at a value of \$4,500.00.
- 1871
to
- 1880.....The City Directories indicate that Barbour and Hamilton, grocers, occupied the lot.

1872/73...The property was assessed to William B. Kibbey at \$4,733.00.

1878/79...The tax records again show the lot assessed to William B. Kibbey at a value of \$4,733.00

1885

to

1892.....The City Directories list Weeks and Co. auctioneers as the occupants of the building.

1893/94...Kibbey's assessment was \$5,163.00 for the ground and \$3,300.00 for the improvements.

1893.....A permit was issued on September 4 to J. W. Kerr to make general repairs and to rebuild a gable wall (Permit #388, Cost: \$125.00).

1895.....Joseph Brothers and Co., auctioneers were listed in the City Directory for this year.

1897.....The City Directory lists Marcus Notes, an auctioneer and furniture dealer, as the tenant this year.

1899

to

1900.....The property is still assessed in William Kibbey's name at a ground value of \$5,163.00 and improvement value of \$2,700.00.

1905

to

1910.....The City Directory lists A. A. Camimack, a used furniture dealer, as the occupant.

1918/22...A. A. Camimack reappears in the Directories to continue their used furniture business.

1930/43...Herman Alisberg, a furniture dealer, occupied the building.

1931.....Louisiana Avenue was renamed Indiana Avenue.

1948

to

1981.....Louis Litwin, a used furniture dealer, now occupies the building.

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map

STATE District of Columbia	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY Washington
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) McCutcheon Building Source: Owner/City Directories		HABS NO. DC-413
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE L. Litwin and Son		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 637 Indiana Avenue, N. W., Square 458, Lot 1		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) ca. 1826. Source: Owner. 1827 City Directory lists John McCutcheon at this location.	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Unknown	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) This building is one of Washington's oldest commercial extant structures. It has retained nearly all of its original features. It served as a grocery in the middle of the 19th Century. Auctioneers and furniture dealers have since occupied the building.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Greek Revival		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Wood joists bearing on lateral brick walls. Granite storefront trim with upper facade in red brick. Gabled roof with wood rafters.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Rectangular 22' x 83' with a one story addition at rear, trapezoidal in plan. Basement plus three stories and attic.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Three bays established by four simple granite piers which have simple Tuscan capitals and support an undecorative stone entablature. Facade topped by a simple corbeled eave cornice. Dormer window on north eave is a later addition to the original. North or rear elevation has granite pier storefront similar to that on main facade.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) All floors open plan. First floor - rear elevation was a ground level and is now enclosed by the one story addition over the former alley. An early open case elevator is located along west party wall.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES To make general repairs and rebuild gable wall (Permit #308, 9/4/1893). Physical evidence shows once central location of stairs between 1st and 2nd floor. One-story addition at rear on what was originally a public alley.		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Good - antique furniture shop.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE This building lies within the boundaries of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. It is scheduled for redevelopment as a part of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation's Historic Preservation Plan, 1977.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Memorial Library - Plat Map Information, Records, National Archives - Building Permit Information, Columbia Historical Society - City Directory Information.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Christina A. Allen, Anderson Notter/Mariani for the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation		DATE 9/15/1981